

## More Struggling With Sin

If you remember that last time we discussed how God's purpose in giving the Law (Ten Commandments) was to show people that they were sinners and that no one could keep the Law on their own. We also talked about how the Bible emphasizes that sin is not only something that we do outwardly, but it's also those things that we think about in our minds. If you can come out of the case presented in **Romans five, six, and seven** thinking that you don't have a problem with sin, I would suggest you go back and carefully read it again. We encourage you to go to our web site at [www.villagechurchofwheaton.org](http://www.villagechurchofwheaton.org), and e-mail us your questions so that we might help clarify anything about these chapters that you might find confusing or difficult to understand. Whether you're a believer in Jesus Christ or not at this point, I believe that anyone who can be completely honest with themselves recognizes they have a sin problem. We all have a problem with sin, not doing the right thing all the time and not making God our highest priority 100% of the time. In fact, let me give you the best definition of sin that I know, and then you decide for yourselves whether you believe what the Bible says in these three chapters (Romans 5-7).

The word translated sin throughout the O.T., with very rare exceptions, is derived from the word which originally signifies to *miss the mark*, and in the New Testament Greek from the word which means a *failure or a coming short of that aim which God intended all His children to reach*. If human beings were originally made in the image of God, that image of God must have been implanted in them as the basic function for living, that they should live as God lives. Every departure, therefore, from doing what is right is a coming short of the purpose for which human beings were made, and a missing of the goal which ought to be reached. The word usually implies a conviction that wrong has been done either towards God or towards a fellow human being. This wrong is not necessarily willful, for many sins are committed through negligence or ignorance (see Lev. 4:2, 5:15, Num. 15:28).<sup>1</sup>

Now just in case you still have some question of whether or not you have a problem with sin, you can look at the following Bible verses from, *Willmington's Book of Bible Lists*, that identify specific sins:

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<sup>1</sup> Girdlestone, Robert Baker; Synonyms of the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans). P. 76.

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| <p>1. Disobedience<br/>Gen. 3:6</p> <p>2. Drunkenness<br/>Gen. 9:21</p> <p>3. Self-worship<br/>Gen. 11:1-9</p> <p>4. <b>Sodomy (homosexuality)</b><br/>Gen. 19; Rom. 1:24-32</p> <p>5. Incest<br/>Gen. 19:33-38</p> <p>6. Lying<br/>Gen. 26:7-8</p> <p>7. Deceit<br/>Gen. 27:11-15</p> <p>8. <b>Hatred</b><br/>Gen. 27:41</p> <p>9. Plotting murder<br/>Gen. 37:18-22</p> <p>10. <b>Idolatry (placing God 2<sup>nd</sup>)</b><br/>Exod. 32</p> <p>11. <b>Murmuring (complaining)</b><br/>Num. 14:29</p> <p>12. Breaking the Sabbath<br/>Num. 15:32-36</p> <p>13. Rebellion<br/>Num. 16</p> <p>14. <b>Covetousness (wanting more)</b><br/>Josh. 7</p> <p>15. Compromise<br/>Judg. 2:1-3</p> <p>16. Intruding into the priests' office<br/>1 Sam. 2:17</p> <p>17. Taking bribes<br/>1 Sam. 8:3</p> <p>18. <b>Pride</b><br/>1 Sam. 14:12-14</p> <p>19. Eating blood<br/>1 Sam. 14:33</p> <p>20. <b>Jealousy</b><br/>1 Sam. 18:8-12</p> <p>21. Experimenting with the Occult<br/>1 Sam. 28:7-18</p> <p>22. <b>Despising a husband (or wife)</b><br/>2 Sam. 6:16-23</p> <p>23. <b>Adultery (sex outside of marriage)</b><br/>2 Sam. 11:4, 27</p> | <p>24. Rape<br/>2 Sam. 13:14</p> <p>25. Causing division among God's people<br/>2 Sam. 15:4</p> <p>26. <b>Mockery (making fun of someone)</b><br/>2 Kings 2:23-24</p> <p>27. Offering human sacrifices<br/>2 Kings 17:17</p> <p>28. <b>Despising God's Word</b><br/>2 Chron. 36:16</p> <p>29. Scattering the sheep<br/>Jer. 23:1</p> <p>30. Self-will<br/>Ezek. 28:17</p> <p>31. <b>Prayerlessness (not praying)</b><br/>Hos. 7:7</p> <p>32. Attributing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit<br/>Matt. 12:24-32</p> <p>33. Teaching false doctrine<br/>Matt. 16:6</p> <p>34. <b>Lack of mercy (forgiveness)</b><br/>Matt. 18:23-35</p> <p>35. <b>Hypocrisy (misleading others)</b><br/>Matt. 23</p> <p>36. Denying Christ<br/>Matt. 26:69-75</p> <p>37. Polluting the house of God<br/>John 2:14-16</p> <p>38. Crucifying Christ<br/>Acts 2:23</p> <p>39. <b>Stubbornness</b><br/>Acts 7:51</p> <p>40. Blasphemy-showing contempt for God<br/>Acts 12:20-23</p> <p>41. Ingratitude<br/>Rom. 1:21</p> <p>42. Boasting<br/>Rom. 1:30</p> <p>43. Disobeying parents<br/>Rom. 1:30</p> <p>44. <b>Lacking natural affection</b><br/>Rom. 1:31</p> <p>45. <b>Living in the flesh (gluttony)</b><br/>Gal. 3:3</p> |
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Hopefully we can now continue in Romans 7:8 with the knowledge that we all share a common family trait, which is sin. And that common trait, sin, can be likened to our being locked in a jail cell. There's no way any of us are going to get out unless someone comes along with the key that will set us free. And while we're in that prison cell of sin, we have to do what the jailer, Satan, tells us to do, and he leads us to do some awful things. But God is much more clever and powerful than Satan and He will send Jesus to unlock our prison cell if we only ask Him. You see in certain ways God uses sin to bring about good. For example, did you know that God gave His Law (Ten Commandments) to the people, not only to show them that they could not keep the Law, but God also used the Law to fuel the passions of sin within a person. Look at Romans 7:8:

*But sin took advantage of this law and **aroused** all kinds of forbidden desires within me! IF THERE WERE NO LAW, SIN WOULD NOT HAVE THAT POWER.*

Sin used the law as a base of operations. Without the stimulus produced by the Law, the evil nature would be relatively inactive. A fulcrum is an instrument in the form of a pole or long stick supported over something such as a log, which when applied beneath an object, will pry that object loose from its position. In just such a manner the sinful nature of people uses the Law as a fulcrum by which to pry sin loose from its relative inactivity into activity.

In Romans 7:8, Paul tells how sin took the commandment **as a base of operations** and created in him *desires of every kind* for that which is forbidden. *Now without law (commandments), sin is dead.* Paul does not say that people don't do sinful things when they don't know the Law. He is saying that without law sin is not apparent to us. It takes a carpenter's level to make clear how far from straight a board really is.<sup>1</sup>

Once we know what sin is and begin to see it for what it is, all of a sudden you see lusts coming out of you that you never knew were there. And when you see sin in this light, you see your need for a Savior you also see that there is no way you can unlock your prison cell door without the key.

Let me give you an example that should make us all squirm a little bit. If someone tells you that they just saw a movie and it's just filled with all kinds of sex and immorality and you shouldn't even think about seeing it, what's your reaction? Might you just have a flicker of interest in seeing it? For some, including many who call themselves Christians, it's a full blown four-alarm fire. But even if you don't go see it, would I be wrong if I suggested you might just think about going to see it? Someone tells us how terrible something is and the more they talk about it the more we want to experience it. That's what this verse is referring to, and with that we'll move on to Romans 7:9:

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<sup>1</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. 1962. The Wycliffe Bible commentary : New Testament . Moody Press: Chicago

*I felt fine when I did not understand what the law demanded. But when I learned the truth, I realized I had broken the law and was a sinner, doomed to die.*

This is the loss of all security, self-esteem, self-satisfaction, and self-preservation. Paul knew that it was at this point of becoming aware of the Law that we recognize our helplessness in saving ourselves. One's spirit is broken and they begin looking for a way to get out from under that horrible guilt since they were exposed to the Law of God.

It wasn't God's intent that they feel good and pleased about themselves as they tried to obey His Law. It was exactly the opposite. God wanted people to feel bad about their behavior when they looked at His Law.

It's true that God is love, but when preachers, teachers, and evangelists preach a gospel which speaks **only** about God's love they're not doing people any favors because they're not making people recognize how far short they fall of God's expectations. They're actually deceiving people rather than loving them. THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW IS TO SHOW YOU THAT YOU ARE A SINNER SO THAT YOU MIGHT SEEK A REMEDY IN AND THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. Now on to Romans 7:10:

*So the good law, which was supposed to show me the way of life, instead gave me the death penalty.*

If you go back into the Old Testament, you'll see reference after reference that indicate the Law was given to provide blessedness in life, to make life full, rich, meaningful, and happy. If you read Proverbs you will see that it talks about the fact that if you are obedient and you accept and apply the wisdom of God, then your days will be long on the earth and God will give you an abundance of blessings. Now perhaps you're saying to yourself, "*Haven't we been learning that the Law was given to show us our sin?*" And the answer to that question is, yes. Now don't allow yourself to get confused because I hope to clarify this right now.

You see **the Law of God was meant to result in your living a full and rich life**. But the Law cannot accomplish that purpose in an unsaved person because an unsaved person cannot obey the Law. Therefore, an unsaved person cannot receive the benefits and blessings of obeying the Law. That's what Paul is saying in verse 10. The Law that God gave in order to provide a full, rich, and meaningful life, just killed him. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, a Christian, and the Holy Spirit dwells within you, you have the potential for keeping the Law. The Law can provide you that kind of life if you obey God in and through the power of the Holy Spirit living within you. You are only able to do this if you are a believing Christian who places God at the very top of your priority list, and who does not allow anything or anyone to replace Him at any time.

If you obey God through the power of the Holy Spirit, will He bless your life? Of course He will. The Law was given to make us recognize our sin and drive us to the only Savior who could help us, Jesus Christ, so that we might be saved by our faith in Him. Then the

Holy Spirit comes and sets up residence within our body so that we can keep the Law if we allow Him to help us do so. Thus we enjoy the blessings that come as the rewards for keeping the Law. Jesus has the key to open our jail cell door and set us free to enjoy a life of abundance both here and now and throughout all eternity.

**The unsaved person is unable to keep God's Law.**

Therefore, the Law cannot bring them any of the truly meaningful things of life. So the Law that was designed to secure life and its fullness for all people only brings about death, ruin, devastation, destruction, disappointment and disillusionment to those who are unsaved. When an unsaved person hears God's Law, all it does is show them how evil they are and it makes them miserable. But when God's Law starts to operate in the heart of a believing Christian, by the power of the Holy Spirit it brings them happiness, holiness, and blessedness. It is impossible for people to enjoy these things if they have not received Christ as their Savior. Romans 7:8:

*Sin took advantage of the law and **fooled me**; it took the good law and used it to make me guilty of death.*

Again Paul is describing his own conversion. Before that Paul must have looked at himself and thought, "*How pleased God must be with me. I'm doing everything possible to obey the Law.*" But when he was confronted with the reality of God's Law and realized **he had to look inside himself** as well, it was then he was aware of the evil in his heart and he threw himself on the promised mercy of Jesus Christ.

How was it that sin fooled Paul? It led him to expect one thing while in reality he was feeling the exact opposite. You see Paul thought that if he obeyed the Law and was self-righteous he would have an abundant life. He thought that he would find life and blessing and purpose and meaning. But you know what living like that got him? Death, misery, sin, unhappiness, disillusionment, and disappointment. And do you know what? The world is filled with people just like Paul before his conversion. They are madly running around chasing a religion of self-righteousness, of keeping rules, of saying their beads, or of lighting their candles, or of going to their temples, or to their seminars, or their Bible studies, or to hear their cultic leaders. Their religions tell them that if they do so many things like this and so many things like that, and if you live a certain type of good life and keep all your good works going and obey all those laws that **supposedly** God has written, if you just keep doing all those things you will have a good and blessed life. All of that is nothing but a big lie from the master liar, Satan.

So many people go along with this religious process. But if they think at all and look into their hearts, in all reality they realize they are not filled with joy at all. They realize that all the promises that were made to them by that religious system are unfulfilled. What do they really find when they look in their hearts? They find misery, unhappiness, and death. That is exactly how sin can fool or deceive you as Paul says in verse 11.

Satan is the master deceiver in the Bible. He establishes a world culture that makes

people believe they can please God and get His blessing by their own works.

And it is a deception because it simply isn't true. I like what Hebrews 3:13 has to say about this very subject:

*You must warn each other every day, as long as it is called "today," so that none of you will be **deceived by sin** and hardened against God.*

Also Ephesians 4:22:

*In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of **deceit**.*

Sin is so deceiving. People think they are doing well and they are not. People think they are pleasing God and they are not.. If Satan wants one thing, it is for people to think they're OK without knowing the truth.

This is getting interesting so let's move on to Romans 7:12:

*But still, the law itself is **holy and right and good**.*

There is nothing wrong with the Law. If the Law reveals sin that's not the fault of the Law. It's the person who is at fault. The Law convinces people of the error of their ways. As the Law shows a person their sin, they see what they are and recognize their need for a Savior. Then when they run to the Savior, Jesus, **grace and mercy is available there for them**.

Next verse, Romans 7:13:

*But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my doom? Of course not! **Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation**. So we can see how terrible sin really is. **It uses God's good commandment for its own evil purposes**.*

Paul is simply once again re-emphasizing that it is the Law that reveals sin in a person's life. And sin can use the Law of God which is holy, just, and good to produce terrible effects. **People are so controlled by sin that instead of realizing the holy purpose of God's Law, they turn away from it and are deceived**. That is the wretched nature of sin. Before going on to the next section of Romans 7, in verses 14-25, I would like to summarize all that we've learned in the first thirteen verses by reading Romans 7:1-13 from the New Living Translation,, Romans 7:1-13:

*1 Now, dear brothers and sisters—you who are familiar with the law—don't you know that the law applies only to a person who is still living?  
2 Let me illustrate. When a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her.*

3 So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries.

4 So this is the point: **The law no longer holds you in its power**, because you died to its power when you died with Christ on the cross. And now **you are united with the one who was raised from the dead**. As a result, you can produce good fruit, that is, good deeds for God.

5 When we were controlled by our old nature, **sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced sinful deeds**, resulting in death.

6 But now **we have been released from the law**, for we died with Christ, and we are no longer captive to its power. **NOW WE CAN REALLY SERVE GOD, NOT IN THE OLD WAY BY OBEYING THE LETTER OF THE LAW, BUT IN THE NEW WAY, BY THE SPIRIT.**

7 Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is evil? Of course not! The law is not sinful, but **it was the law that showed me my sin**. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, "Do not covet."

8 But sin took advantage of this law and aroused all kinds of forbidden desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power.

9 **I felt fine when I did not understand what the law demanded**. But when I learned the truth, I realized I had broken the law and was a sinner, doomed to die.

10 So the good law, which was supposed to show me the way of life, instead gave me the death penalty.

11 Sin took advantage of the law and fooled me; it took the good law and used it to make me guilty of death.

12 But still, the law itself is holy and right and good.

13 But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my doom? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commandment for its own evil purposes.

Now let's move on to Romans 7:14:

*The law is good, then. **The trouble is not with the law but with me**, because I am sold into slavery, with sin as my master.*

Here we have a picture of a person in conflict with themselves. Here is someone who loves God's Law and truly wants to obey it. But they are pulled away from fulfilling that desire by the sin that is within them. It is the personal experience of a soul in conflict. It's a battle that rages in a person's heart. Every honest believing Christian knows that even though they are a new creation in Christ and sin's dominion over them is broken and no longer rules over them, sin is still a problem. So when we look at a believer here in chapter seven we know that we have to look at a Christian that is still having conflict with sin even though his/her new creation is holy. Then moving on to Romans 7:15, we

read:

*I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, **I do the very thing I hate.***

Again we see here a person who wants to do what is right but something prevents them from doing it. You want to know what kind of Christian is being described here in these verses? One who sees so clearly their own inability not to sin when they are confronted by the holiness of God expressed in God's Law. The more mature one is in their walk with God, the more spiritual they are, the greater will be their sensitivity to their own shortcomings or sin. Paul has mentioned the solution in Romans 7:6, that there is to be a new way, the way of the Spirit. The end of Romans 7 describes the problem and chapter 8 is coming. Chapter 8 will show the solution in greater detail. But between Romans 7:6 and Romans 8 there is a graphic description of someone who is indeed a Christian and who has started on the road with Christ.

The moment we receive Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. However, day by day, each of us describes whether we are going to push The Spirit off to a small room, or whether we are going to let Him have full run of the house, or our lives. Ephesians 5:18, "Let the Holy Spirit fill and control You." We, unfortunately, have the ability, or the potential, to quench (1 Thessalonians 5:19) or grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). When we do this, we find ourselves in the predicament described in the last verses of Romans 7.

Show me an immature Christian who gives in to the carnal pleasures of the people around them, emphasizes a need to adhere to a set of religious rules, and is self-righteous, and I will most likely be able to show you a person who thinks everything they do is very spiritual, yet is not yielding to the Holy Spirit and allowing Him to control their life. But show me a person who admits to the kind of brokenness that Paul demonstrates in these verses, a person agonizing in the depths of their own soul because they cannot do everything written in the Law of God, the Ten Commandments, and I will most likely be able to show you a spiritual person who loves the Lord with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. A person who recognizes that the ugly reality of sin still is hanging on in their physical bodies. I really like what Paul has to say in 1 Timothy 1:12-16:

*How thankful I am to Christ Jesus our Lord for considering me trustworthy and appointing me to serve him,  
13 even though I used to scoff at the name of Christ. I hunted down his people, harming them in every way I could. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief.  
14 Oh, how kind and gracious the Lord was! He filled me completely with faith and the love of Christ Jesus.  
15 This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I was the worst of them all.  
16 But that is why God had mercy on me, so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of **his great patience with even the worst sinners.***



***Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.***

This is what Paul is confirming in these last few verses of Romans 7. Here we see Paul well along in his apostleship, mature in his faith for Christ, and having experienced the mighty power and wisdom of God. The more he knows and the more he experiences, the more he hates the sin that he sees hanging on.

But he loves righteousness as we see in Romans 7:16-21:

*I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience shows that I agree that the law is good.*

*17 But I can't help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things.*

*18 I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't.*

*19 When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway.*

*20 But if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing it; the sin within me is doing it.*

*21 It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong.*

Paul loves the Law of God from the bottom of his heart and deeply regrets his sins in Romans 7:22-24:

*I love God's law with all my heart.*

*23 But there is another law at work within me that is at war with my mind. This law wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.*

*24 Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin?*

And then in the last verse of Romans 7, Paul thanks God for the deliverance that is his in Christ Jesus our Lord, Romans 7:25:

*Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.*

Sin doesn't reign in our new nature, our oneness with Christ, but it reigns in our mortal physical body. And as soon as a believer dies they go immediately to Heaven because their soul has already been made fit for Heaven through their faith in Jesus. All they'll have to do is get rid of their physical bodies. This is the only hope for everlasting life in Heaven that people have. It can only be received through faith in Christ and His work on

our behalf. Let us too thank Him for this gift. And let's thank Him, also, for the Holy Spirit which enables us to live victoriously in this life. Next time we'll begin to learn how to live life in the Spirit as we get into Romans 8.